

For an interview, call: George Getz, Deputy Communications Director ♦ (202) 333-0008 Ext. 222

Clinton's War on Marijuana sets record: 641,642 arrests — and ruined lives

Libertarians demand end to 'savage and destructive' war

WASHINGTON, DC — Who says Bill Clinton is "soft on drugs?" Not the 641,642 Americans who were arrested last year on marijuana charges — the largest number in our nation's history, the Libertarian Party noted today.

"The president who didn't inhale is the president who doesn't show any mercy," said Steve Dasbach, chairman of the Libertarian Party. "He's waging a savage and destructive War on Drugs that dwarfs anything done by Ronald Reagan or George Bush."

A new FBI report says that 641,642 people were arrested on marijuana charges in 1996 — of which 85.2% were for mere possession.

That's more than double the 300,000 or so marijuana users who were arrested annually during 1991 and 1992, when Bush was president. It also pushes to 2.1 million the total number of people arrested for marijuana charges under the Clinton administration.

"And what have we gotten for all these arrests?" asked Dasbach. "The record is clear . . ."

■ More money siphoned away from preventing violent crime.

"Law enforcement spends \$7.5 to \$10 billion a year on marijuana prohibition," said Dasbach. "In a nation where a murder is committed every 25 minutes and a rape is committed every five minutes, wasting billions of dollars to arrest marijuana users is the *real* crime."

■ Little change in the availability of the drug.

A study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that 85% of high school seniors consider marijuana "easy" to obtain — a number that has remained steady over the past 10 years, Dasbach noted.

■ And now, after all these failures, the government wants to spend *more* money.

"The Office of National Drug Control Policy is demanding \$175 million to run television advertisements urging people not to use drugs," said Dasbach. "They figure that a quick lecture during a 30-second TV advertisement can accomplish what 641,642 arrests didn't."

"When Americans are jailed for marijuana offenses — and 50,000 are every year — their lives, families, and careers are ruined," Dasbach said. "It's time to stop ruining more lives. Drug abuse should be dealt with through privately funded education and treatment — not a misguided War on Marijuana that claimed 641,642 victims last year alone."

#